

Guidelines During Boil Advisory or Water Interruption

Food Safety Program of the Columbus Health Department

Water service can be interrupted or contaminated for any number of reasons from construction accidents to fire department demands to natural disasters. In general, a Boil Advisory means that all water to be used for cooking, drinking or cleaning food contact equipment **should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute** prior to use and signs posted on equipment to instruct employees of proper safeguards.

If a boil advisory is issued or you experience a loss of water service, any operation that prepares, cooks or cleans foods should follow these guidelines to ensure the health and safety of its customers. You will need to carefully assess all parts of your operation that require water. Change your menu, if necessary.

If you cannot arrange to have potable (safe) water to cook, clean, serve and wash hands, you must CLOSE until you can put the proper safeguards in place.

The following list outlines safeguards as well as some helpful hints:

Alternatives that are not stated below must be pre-approved by the Columbus Health Department.

1. Drinking water

- Use boiled or bottled water. If you use boiled water for drinking, the taste may be improved by transferring the boiled water from container to container to aerate it.

Water filtering units may not remove all contaminants.

2. Beverage machines or beverage dispenser “guns” connected to waterlines

- Shut off water to the machines and post signs. It is best to buy prepackaged products for consumer use.

Flush the lines on beverage machines thoroughly after the advisory is lifted. Sanitize lines if necessary.

3. Ice machines

- Turn off the water and circuit breaker to the ice machine. Discard all ice made after the boil advisory was issued. Buy bagged ice from an approved supplier.

Flush the lines for the ice machine thoroughly after the advisory is lifted. Sanitize lines and inside machine if necessary.

4. Preparing, cooking or reconstituting food

- Use boiled or bottled water only. Discard all food that may have been prepared during a water interruption or Boil Advisory.

When in doubt, throw it out!

5. Thawing food

- Thaw food only in a refrigerator or a microwave.

6. Washing produce / produce sprayers

- Use only boiled or bottled water to wash produce. Disconnect all produce sprayers in retail areas. Consider using bagged, pre-washed, ready-to-eat produce, frozen or canned produce

Flush the lines of the produce sprayers thoroughly after the advisory is lifted. Sanitize lines if necessary.

7. Handwashing for employees and the public

- Use boiled, bottled, or potable water from an alternative source. A temporary handwash station may be set up by using a large urn or thermos, with a spout, full of 110°F water and a bucket to collect wastewater.

8. Cleaning and sanitizing of tableware, kitchenware, vending machine components and food contact surfaces

- Use boiled water for all compartments of a three-compartment sink. Do not use dish machines. Hot water or chemical sanitizer may not be adequate if the water is contaminated with parasites.

Sanitize all food contact surfaces and equipment after Boil Advisory is lifted.

9. Dipper wells

- Turn off water and post signs. Utensils may be stored in food as long as handle does not touch food. (Do not store scoops in standing water)

Sanitize all dipper wells after Boil Advisory is lifted.

NOTE:

An average size business will need to have at least 200 gallons of potable water available per day to operate. There may be circumstances where available alternatives are not sufficient to provide acceptable public health protection. Menu diversity, sales volume, number of employees and other factors can make it impossible to provide sufficient and suitable alternatives necessary for keeping the operation open. Further, although employees may be expected to take the extra effort necessary for improvising and for using less convenient alternatives during a short interruption in the water supply, it is not practical to expect them to continue safe practices over time if it is not convenient to do so. When safe, sufficient and practical alternatives are not available, it will be necessary to cease food operations until the Boil Advisory is lifted.

After the boil advisory is lifted by the water department:

- Flush the building's water lines for at least two minutes
- Clean faucet screens,
- Clean the water line strainers on mechanical dishwashing machines and similar equipment.
- Purge all water-using fixtures and appliances of standing water (ice machines, beverage makers, hot water heaters, etc)
- Clean and sanitize all fixtures, sinks and equipment connected to the waterlines.

If you have any questions, please call the Columbus Health Department, Food Safety Program, during regular business hours (8:00 AM – 5:00 PM) at (614) 645-7005 or after business hours at (614) 645-6971.

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